



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Chairman

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BAUCUS, KEY SENATORS, DEMAND KOREA TO OPEN BEEF MARKET

Finance Chairman Says Failure to Open Market Will Sink Free Trade Agreement

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Chairman of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, today expressed impatience with Korea's persistent unwillingness to lift its ban on U.S. beef. Baucus invited key Senators to meet with South Korea's Ambassador Lee Tae Sik this afternoon. At the meeting, Baucus made clear that his support for a U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement hinges on how negotiators handle beef.

"Our ranchers don't need more excuses. They need results. We've been patient and cooperative with the Korean government, but now is the time for action," Baucus said. **"America's ranchers, the world's scientists, and my Senate colleagues speak with one voice: America's beef is safe and should be in Korea's market now."**

Baucus arranged today's meeting to permit a candid discussion on the status of the resumption of beef trade with Korea. The meeting coincides with the fifth round of negotiations for a U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement, which are taking place in Seoul, Korea. These talks include access to Korea's agriculture market.

"I have long supported negotiations for a free trade agreement with Korea," said Baucus. **"But I can't support an agreement that does not open Korea's market to Montana's beef exports -- whether boneless or bone-in, and regardless of age. I hope negotiators are listening and will soon find a solution."**

Korea was the third largest importer of U.S. beef before it banned the importation of U.S. beef in 2003 following reports of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, from cattle that originated in Canada. Korea partially opened its market in September 2006 to imports of boneless beef from cattle less than 30 months old. Since then, Korea has rejected three large shipments after lengthy inspections found tiny bone fragments. International scientific standards support the safety of U.S. beef – whether boneless, bone-in, or offals – regardless of the age of the cattle.

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